

Introduction

V.1 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.”

The beginning of the parable.
Why does He say this?

This is the beginning of a new section of teaching.

This section does not appear to have correlation to any teaching before it. Jesus is leaving the room with His disciples and He is going to the location in which He will be betrayed and arrested.

This is the last opportunity for the Lord to instruct these men concerning His Words and the purpose of the Father.

They will need more information to minister like He did.

It is safe to assume that this parable represents foundational elements that were in place as Jesus ministered.

Therefore, these men will carry on the ministry of the Lord and become “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

Jesus introduces the main Persons involved in this parable: the Son and the Father.

The Son: the vine, the true one.
The Father: the vinedresser.

The Son: the vine, the true one.

The disciples would be familiar with a “vine.”

In the OT, which is the only frame of reference the disciples had, a vine¹ was used often as a metaphor for other realities.

That is, the description of a vine was a poetic way to describe whatever the speaker wanted to denote from the behavior of the vine and compare it to the behavior of the item being compared.

In Genesis 40, the vine was seen in the cupbearer's dream as he picked the grapes off of it and squeezed them and gave the resulting wine to the king, which Joseph interpreted as a restoration to his former position.

In Numbers 20:5 and Deuteronomy 8:8 the vine is a part of the description of luxury and the good life².

It is a vine of grapes which produce juice and wine, which is was a luxury in those days.

In Isaiah the vine is often associated with destruction and decay³.

In the rest of the prophets, vines are referred to as anything from Israel, to the remnant, to the shaking of the nations in judgment, to the Abrahamic blessing to Israel.

The point is, everyone was familiar with a vine.

A vine was a creeping plant that could not be held back.
It was productive, but required care and nourishment.
It needed good soil and regular attention.

There is one illustration that will introduce John 15 the best and it is found in Isaiah 5:1-5

¹ with suff. וַיִּנְּי; pl. מִיִּנְּי comm. (m. rarely Hos. 10:1; 2 Ki. 4:39), a *twig*, and a plant which has twigs, especially a *vine*, which however ["comp. *salix* = ἑλιξ prop. a rod, switch"], when more exactness was needed, as in the laws, is called וַיִּנְּי Nu. 6:4; Jud. 13:14; rarely used of other similar plants, as 2 וַיִּנְּי Kings 4:39, a wild vine, on which wild cucumbers grew. Hence most commonly it simply denotes a *vine*, Gen. 40:9; Isa. 7:23; 24:7; 32:12; Jud. 9:13, seq. A *noble vine* figuratively denotes men of more noble qualities, Jer 2:21 (compare Isa. 5:2); and on the other hand, a *wild vine*, *vine of Sodom* (Jer. loc. cit.; Deut. 32:32), denotes men of ignoble and degenerate qualities; as to the latter, see on the apples of Sodom, Jos. Bell. Jud. iv. 8, § 4. p 178 Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). [*Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*](#) (p. 177). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

² See *Judges 9:13; 1 Kings 4:25; 2 Kings 18:31.*

³ *Isaiah 16:8; 24:7; 34:4;*

Isaiah 5:1-4

- 1 Let me sing now for my well-beloved
A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.
My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.
- 2 He dug it all around, removed its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine.
And He built a tower in the middle of it
And also hewed out a wine vat in it;
Then He expected *it* to produce *good* grapes,
But it produced *only* worthless ones.
- 3 “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge between Me and My vineyard.
- 4 “What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it?
Why, when I expected *it* to produce *good* grapes did it produce worthless
ones?

Poetically, God is speaking through Isaiah to tell Israel that He expected them to produce righteousness (v.7), but instead they produced bloodshed and judgment.

But notice about whom the parable is speaking:

“Well-beloved” = His vineyard, had a vineyard....

“Vineyard” = belonged to the well-beloved, on a fertile hill, protected, and choice in vine selection.

Notice the context:

Chapters 1-4

Chapter 1:1-17, 21-28 (especially vv. 21, 28).

Chapter 2:1-11

Chapter 3:1-26

Chapter 4 = hope (cf. 1:24-26; 2:1-5)

The point: Israel has desired to act like the nations, to the extent that they were behaving like Sodom, Gomorrah, and the Philistines.

Isaiah 1:10

- 10 Hear the word of the Lord,
You rulers of Sodom;
Give ear to the instruction of our God,
You people of Gomorrah.

The fruit of their lust after the nations was separation from their God and judgment that would become irrevocable.

Isaiah 1:4

4 Alas, sinful nation,
People weighed down with iniquity,
Offspring of evildoers,
Sons who act corruptly!
They have abandoned the Lord,
They have despised the Holy One of Israel,
They have turned away from Him.

Isaiah 2:6

6 For You have abandoned Your people, the house of Jacob,
Because they are filled *with influences* from the east,
And *they are* soothsayers like the Philistines,
And they strike *bargains* with the children of foreigners.

Isaiah 3:8–12

8 For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen,
Because their speech and their actions are against the Lord,
To rebel against His glorious presence.
9 The expression of their faces bears witness against them,
And they display their sin like Sodom;
They do not *even* conceal *it*.
Woe to them!
For they have brought evil on themselves.
10 Say to the righteous that *it will go well with them*,
For they will eat the fruit of their actions.
11 Woe to the wicked! *It will go badly with him*,
For what he deserves will be done to him.
12 O My people! Their oppressors are children,
And women rule over them.
O My people! Those who guide you lead *you* astray
And confuse the direction of your paths.

Then, we come to chapter 5 and we see why:

God brought Israel out of a land in which Israel was incapable of producing fruit, the land of Egypt:

Psalms 80:7–9

- 7 O God *of* hosts, restore us
And cause Your face to shine *upon us*, and we will be saved.
- 8 You removed a vine from Egypt;
You drove out the nations and planted it.
- 9 You cleared *the ground* before it,
And it took deep root and filled the land.

In doing that, God made it possible in every way for Israel to produce the fruit of God in that land.

They did not.

God worked the ground, cut away the weeds, fertilized the soil, and planted a choice vine.

But, instead of producing the grapes of righteousness, they produced the grapes of iniquity (v.4).

What does this mean?

In short, the parable is meant to prove that the vine and the plant and the soil were all incapable of sustaining life.

The very nature of the vine and the soil are defunct and depraved.
Every man is a liar and every inhabitant a pursuer of transgression.

Instead of being a holy nation, a nation made up of pure, devoted enduring followers of YHWH, they followed the nations and left YHWH.

This parable very well may be the backdrop for the parable of the vine in chapter 15.

The vine in Isaiah 5 is Israel.
The fruit there is iniquity.

In contrast, the vine in John 15 is Jesus Christ.
The fruit is truth.

“I am the true vine”

What is a vine?

The vine is that which sprouts out of the ground (see Genesis 19:25).

In the OT, it is called a “branch.”⁴

In the NT, it is called a “vine.”

It is essentially the same as both come from the soil and produce smaller segments that then carry the fruit of that particular branch or vine.

As mentioned, in Isaiah 5, the vine, vineyard, and fruit were all defunct; wasteful.

However, in the parable of John 15, the soil, the vine, the branches, and the fruit are all productive and fruitful!

In the OT, Israel is seen as a vine, but the Messiah, the Son of David, is the Branch.

Isaiah 6:13

13 “Yet there will be a tenth portion in it,
And it will again be *subject* to burning,
Like a terebinth or an oak
Whose stump remains when it is felled.
The holy seed is its stump.”

Isaiah 11:1–2

1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Isaiah 4:2

2 In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth *will be* the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel.

Zechariah 3:8

⁴ צִמְחָה: sf. 1—:צִמְחָה. coll. **growth, what sprouts** Gn 19:25; *ṭarpê ṣimḥāh* its fresh shoots Ez 17:9;—2. (the individual) **shoot, bud**: metaph. of Messianic king Je 23:5.

Holladay, W. L., & Köhler, L. (2000). [*A concise Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament*](#) (p. 307). Leiden: Brill.

- 8 'Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.

Zechariah 6:12–13

- 12 "Then say to him, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord.
- 13 "Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices." '

Jesus Christ is the Branch, a vine who will come from better soil.
He has a better nature.
He will bear better fruit.

However, notice the similarities.

God is still the vinedresser.

That is, He is the landscaper, the gardener, the worker in the field.

Truly, the worker is responsible for the product.

Yet, he is limited by the quality of the plant.

But, notice the nature of the Vine in this parable: true.

He is the vine, the true one.
He is authentic, as compared to the previous vine of Israel.

Now, this Branch, Messiah, will produce true fruit.
Now, the vinedresser, "My Father," can work with true, 100% production.
Now, with a better Branch, soil, and fruit, the bad can be weeded out with efficiency and clarity.

Now, with all this in mind, what does it have to say?

Summary:

Matthew 21:28-45

Israel, produced nothing of value in their fruit because they are not part of the Branch.
They are not true.

They are not authentic.

How do we know?

Matthew 7:15–27

Look at what they produce!

1 Corinthians 8:3

3 but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.